

Hatcher Pass Management Plan

Recreational Focus Group Meeting Summary Motorized and Non-Motorized Recreational Use Discussion

The Department of Natural Resources, Division of Mining, Land, and Water (DMLW), and Department of Outdoor Recreation, (DPOR), held four focus discussion workshops in March and April 2009, in Anchorage and Wasilla, to discuss the recreational uses that take place in within the Hatcher Pass Management Plan area, (HPMP). Two meetings were scheduled for both motorized and non-motorized use discussions.

These meetings were initially intended to be shareholder meetings, with representatives of local recreational user groups. However, after the meetings were scheduled, many members of the public also chose to attend the meetings. The attendance for each recreational use was about equally attended. Over 120 people attended the four meetings. This report is a summary of the comments and map depictions provided to us by the meeting attendees.

At each meeting the attendees were broken down into groups and given recreational use questionnaires, large topographic maps, and were asked how, where, when, and which mode of travel (motorized or non-motorized) they used when recreating. This information was then noted by the workgroups on the large scale maps.

General Results:

Recreational Use Designation Discussion

There were several common concerns expressed at each discussion session, which included the following:

- Many believed that all of the land within the HPMP was a public use area and/or state park.
- Many attendees expressed mistrust of State intent and felt that the State had pre-determined the recreational use designations for the area already.
- The majority of recreational use overlap is experienced during the winter, not in the summer.
- Motorized recreational users feared that the entire area would be closed to motorized use. Many motorized users wanted the entire area opened to motorized use, including areas that are currently closed.
- Non-motorized recreational users feared that the entire area would be open to motorized use. Many non-motorized users wanted the central and eastern area closed to motorized use.
- Parking and permit fees were discussed at each meeting. It was suggested that all visitors who park their vehicles in the area; on roads, pullouts, and parking lots, should be charged a parking fee.
- It was suggested that the northern boundary be extended to the Kashwitna River, as some recreational users venture as far as the river. This was asserted by those involved mountaineering, paragliding, and pilots who fly over the entire HPMP area.

The types of recreational use documented by the attendees included:

Motorized Activities

ATV

Off Road 4 X 4

Snow Machines

**Also defined as "snow mobiles"*

Non- Motorized Activities

Berry Picking

Bike Riding

Bird Watching

Dog Sled

Hiking

Horse Back

Hunting

Kayaking

Mountaineering

Paragliding

River Rafting

Rock Climbing

Skiing

Sledding

Snow Boarding

Snowshoeing

**Non-Motorized Activities may accompany motorized recreation and transportation depending on the user.*

Recreational Use Designation Workgroup Map Depiction

Non-Motorized Use

Non-Motorized users indicated that their use is concentrated in the central, eastern and southern units. Their use of the area occurs throughout the year. Certain areas, like the Archangel Trail and Government Peak area are used more intensely during the winter.

Motorized Use

Motorized users indicated that their use takes place throughout the HPMP area. The concentration of their use is on the numerous snow machine trails in the Willow Mountain Unit. Some admitted they also utilize the non-motorized areas. Their recreational use of the area is more intense during the winter than the summer.

Overlapping Use Concerns

Attendees noted areas where they had experienced overcrowding, non-motorized designated areas that were being used by recreational users, expressed safety concerns, and indicated potential parking areas.

Many of the attendees at the four meetings depicted the same areas where they have observed or experienced overlapping recreational use; motorized and non-motorized. Although many users stated they had not experienced any significant conflicts in the shared use areas, the areas that they had experienced some degree of frustration in, primarily included: the Archangel Trail, sections surrounding Government Peak, parking along the roadway and in non-motorized designated areas during the times when motorized users recreated there. Trespass concerns were expressed regarding trespass problems in the mountaineering huts located within and bordering the northwest section of the management plan area.

Overlapping Recreational Use Concern Resolutions

Groups from the non-motorized and motorized communities offered suggestions about how to resolve and/or alleviate frustrations in the overlapping use areas, which included the following:

- Motorized users did not want any further closures and requested access corridors through areas that have motorized use restrictions.
- Non-motorized users recommended access corridors around the restricted use areas.
- Some attendees from both groups suggested splitting the management area in half; west motorized and east non-motorized.
- Some attendees from both groups suggested implementing an alternating recreational use schedule.
- Several users recommended that all users pay a parking or permit fee, regardless of where they park
- Additional parking lots were also requested.

Focus Group Depiction of Recreational Uses by Management Unit

Unit	Use
Willow Mountain (WMU)	<p>The WMU is located in the western area of the HPMP. It is the largest unit and encompasses nearly 55% of the HPMP. This unit is nearly all state owned land.</p> <p>The predominant recreational use is motorized, including snow machines, ATV's and 4 X 4s. Recreational use takes place year round, but mainly occurs in the winter along a number of snow machine trails. The unit is also used for bear hunting. Non-motorized use occurs primarily in the eastern section of the unit, and includes cross country skiing, hiking and snowboarding. Dog sledding also occurs in the eastern and southern sections of this unit.</p>
Lucky Shot Ridge / Baldy North (LSR/BNU)	<p>LSR/BNU is directly south of the WMU. It covers an area both north and south of the Willow-Fishhook Creek Road. There are several private parcels and mining claims located north and south of the road located within this unit.</p> <p>Both motorized and non-motorized recreational uses take place on this unit throughout the year. Non-motorized winter recreation is concentrated in the southeastern section of the unit in the winter, and the Summit Lake SRS and Bald Mountain Habitat Area in the summer. All noted types of motorized and non-motorized uses occur in this unit. Hunting was highlighted in this unit.</p> <p>Overlapping use concerns were noted in the Bald Mountain Habitat Area, located in the central, southwestern section of the unit. It is closed to motorized use during the summer. This area is popular for ATV, 4 X 4, and off road recreation. An RS 2477 Trail crosses the eastern section of the habitat area, allowing for motorized access and transport through it.</p>
Willow Creek/ Craige Creek (WC/CCU)	<p>WC/CCU is located in the center of the HPMP. There are private parcels, Mat-Su Borough Parcels, and mining claims in this unit. This unit straddles the Willow-Fishhook Creek Road.</p> <p>Both motorized and non-motorized recreational uses take place in this unit throughout the year. Snow machines are primarily used along the road to access the Willow Mountain Unit. Non-motorized uses occur primarily in the central and eastern portions of the unit.</p> <p>Concerns over snow machine speed, high marking, and road access were expressed.</p>
Hillside (HU)	<p>HU is located on the southern boundary of the HPMP, south of the LSR/BNU. Although there are several private parcels, most of this unit is general state land.</p> <p>Both motorized and non-motorized uses occur in this unit throughout the year, yet it was not depicted as heavily used. Motorized use occurs in the summer along an RS 2477 Trail in the western section of the unit. Non-motorized uses include horseback riding, hunting, hiking, and skiing primarily in the northern half of this unit</p>
Government Peak (GPU)	<p>GPU is east of the HU. It encompasses a combination of state land, Mat-Su Borough land, and the southern (non-restricted) section of the Hatcher Pass Public Use Area. It is also the area of potential ski resort development by the Matsui Borough. The southern portion of the Hatcher Pass Public Use Area is located in this unit.</p> <p>This unit is very popular for winter activity. Both motorized and non-motorized uses occur in this unit. Snow machining, skiing, and snowboarding are the most common uses. The area that non-motorized users prefer is the peak itself and the Mile 16 Run.</p> <p>There are several areas of overlapping use in this unit, generally around Government Peak, along the road, and into the 16 Mile area. Since much of this unit is closed to motorized use, concerns about enforcement of the recreational use were raised. Safety concerns about the amount of different recreational uses taking place and number of visitors were also raised. Several attendees noted that someone had posted "No-trespassing" signs along Waldo Road that prohibited all use, including berry picking.</p>

Focus Group Depiction of Recreational Uses by Management Unit

Unit	Use
Independence (IU)	<p>IU is located directly north of the GPU. Over half of the unit is comprised of private parcels, mining claims, Matsu borough parcels, a state park, and an ILMA. This unit also has a large parking lot and a lodge.</p> <p>This unit is popular for skiers, hikers, and visitors of the historic park and other non-motorized uses. There is confusion about the allowable uses in this unit. The unit is closed to motorized use according to the 1986 Hatcher Pass Management Plan. The state regulations only restrict motorized use in the actual historic park; the western half of the unit. DPOR depicts all but the southwest and southeast segments of the unit as restricted.</p> <p>Concerns about overlapping uses in this area primarily pertained to parking availability, and the speed of snow machines along the Willow-Fishhook Road. Users also wanted clarification on the allowable uses.</p>
Archangel (AU)	<p>The AU is located east of the IU. There are several private parcels and Matsu borough parcels located on it.</p> <p>The Archangel Trail is very popular for all recreational users throughout the year. Usage increases in the winter. Although all types of recreation take place in this unit, snow machiners and skiers utilize this area the most.</p> <p>Overlapping use occurs primarily along the Archangel road, trail, and trail head. Concerns about the multiple uses in this unit are generally over parking, access, speed of snow machiners, and high marking. Concerns about enforcement of motorized use restrictions were raised about the area along the eastern border of the unit, where it meets the non-motorized western section of the Hatcher Pass Special Use Area.</p>
Reed Lakes (RLU)	<p>RLU is located east of the AU. The unit is entirely state owned. The western wing of the Hatcher Pass Special Use Area (HPSUA), is located along the western border of this unit. The HPSUA is closed to motorized use, year round.</p> <p>Both motorized and non-motorized recreational uses take place in this unit, with increased activity during the winter. The mountainous eastern portions of this unit are used by snow-machiners and back country skiers.</p> <p>Concerns about overlapping use in this area were focused on the western section of the unit, within the western wing of the HPSUA. A need for better enforcement of the motorized use restrictions was noted. The area is depicted as “non-motorized” on the public DPOR snow machine map, yet snow machiners recreate there. Motorized users would like an access corridor through the HPSUA.</p>
Little Susitna (LSU)	<p>LSU is the second largest unit in the HPMP. It is located on the eastern border of the HPMP. It is entirely state land. The Hatcher Pass Public Use Area, (HPPUA), and the right wing of the Hatcher Pass Special Use Area, (HPSUA) are located within this unit. The right wing of the HPSUA underlies the northern half of the HPPUA. It is closed to motorized use, year round.</p> <p>All types of recreational use occur in this unit year round, with an increase in activity during the winter. Kayaking and rafting occur along the Little Susitna River. Mountaineering and Paragliding were highlighted uses of this unit, mainly in the northern region.</p> <p>Concerns about overlapping use in this area pertain to the eastern wing of the HPSUA and the need for better enforcement of the use restrictions. The area is depicted as “non-motorized” on the public DPOR snow machine map, yet snow machiners recreate there. Motorized users would like an access corridor through the HPSUA</p>

List of Recreational Uses by Unit

Unit	Motorized Activities & Transportation	Use Area	Season	Non Motorized Activities		Use Area	Season
Willow Mountain (WMU)	ATV 4x4 (ORV) Snow Machine	All	Summer and Winter	Hiking Horseback Riding Hunting Paragliding	Skiing Snowboarding Snowshoeing	Eastern Border	Summer and Winter
Lucky Shot Ridge / Baldy North (LS/BNU)	ATV 4x4 (ORV) Snow Machine	All	Summer	Berry Picking Bike Riding Bird Watching Dog Sled Hiking Hunting	Horseback Riding Paragliding Skiing Snowshoeing	Northeast and Southern Area	Summer
Willow Creek / Craigie Creek Unit (WC/CCU)	ATV 4x4 (ORV) Snow Machine	All	Winter	Berry Picking Bike Riding Dog Sled Hiking Horseback Riding	Paragliding Skiing Sledding Snowboarding Snowshoeing	Central and Eastern Area	Summer and Winter
Hillside (HU)	ATV 4x4 (ORV) Snow Machine Hunting	All	Summer	Hiking Skiing Snowshoeing		All	Summer and Winter
Government Peak (GPU)	ATV Snow Machine	All	Winter	Dog Sleds Hiking Horseback Riding Hunting Kayaking Paragliding	Mountaineering Rock Climbing Skiing Sledding Snowboarding Snowshoeing	All	Winter
Independence (IU)	ATV Snow Machine	Southern Area	Winter	Bike Riding Hiking Horseback Riding Paragliding	Mountaineering Rock Climbing Skiing Snowshoeing	All	Summer and Winter
Archangel (AU)	ATV Snow Machine	All	Winter	Berry Picking Dog Sleds Hiking Paragliding Mountaineering	Rock Climbing Skiing Snowboarding Snowshoeing	All	Winter
Reed Lakes (RLU)	ATV Snow Machine	All	Winter	Hiking Rock Climbing Skiing Snowboarding Snowshoeing		All	Summer and Winter
Little Susitna (LSU)	ATV Snow Machine	Western Border	Winter	Hiking Kayaking Mountaineering River Rafting Rock Climbing Skiing Snowboarding Snowshoeing		All	Summer and Winter

**Snow Machines are also defined as “snow mobiles”.*

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